

35 Events Set To Celebrate Park's 150th

By JOSEPH BERGER

With Central Park's 150th birthday drawing near, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Parks Department officials yesterday announced 35 events to celebrate the occasion. They will start this spring and continue through December.

There will be a festival of five films starring Central Park; an exhibit of Central Park paintings; a display of landscape drawings by the park's designers, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux; a light show; a Halloween ball; an academic conference on parks; an auction of 40 park benches decorated by artists and designers, including James Rosenquist and Charles Gwathmey (one is covered in subway tokens); and a jazz concert featuring Wynton Marsalis.

The climax will be a party from dawn till night on July 19. It will include the world archery championships, a bicycle race and a concert by the singer Andrea Bocelli.

On July 21, 1853, the New York Legislature authorized the city to buy largely barren swampland for a "central park." The park took 16 years to build and cost \$14 million, roughly \$260 million in today's dollars, according to the Central Park Conservancy, a nonprofit agency

founded in 1980. Today, the conservancy manages the park under a contract with the city, and it has raised more than \$300 million to restore the park to what many users feel is near-mint condition.

Mr. Bloomberg, at a news confer-

ence yesterday outside the playfully Gothic cottage known as the Dairy, tried to emphasize why Central Park seems to get more attention than other parks.

"For millions of New Yorkers, as you know, Central Park is not just a

park," he said. "It is our front yard. It is our picnic spot, our playground, our nature preserve, our band shell, our field of dreams. It is truly a democratic space where people of every race and background can mingle freely."



Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Parks Department officials at a news conference yesterday in Central Park.

Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times